

VZCZCXYZ0008  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUB #0306 1022026  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 112026Z APR 08  
FM USINT HAVANA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3118

UNCLAS HAVANA 000306

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

M, OFM, L, WHA/FO, WHA/CCA, WHA/EX

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CU](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: APPARENT CHANGES IN GOC MANAGEMENT/LOGISTICS  
POLICIES

¶1. (SBU) Summary: USINT has noticed several changes in the way the GOC is handling management/logistics issues that may indicate some changes in policy. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The following is a list of apparent policy changes regarding management/logistical issues between USINT and the GOC:

- Increase in local staff hiring: CUBALSE, the Cuban government employment office that services diplomatic missions, has begun to provide candidates for local staff positions. A year ago USINT had close to 50 local hire vacancies; now there are less than 20.

- Increase in facilities maintenance support: After waiting more than a year, the GOC provided a crane last week to lift an 8-ton air conditioning chiller onto the roof of the Interests Section. The Cuban agency responsible for providing houses to USINT personnel recently has been noticeably more responsive in maintaining and repairing our properties. The Refugee Annex project, which languished for almost two years, was completed last month.

- Increase in pre-approvals to import supplies and equipment: Though the GOC rejects some 25% of unclassified pouches, it has increased the number of pre-approvals to import official supplies and equipment via sea and air freight, rather than the pouch. During the first week of April we received seven pre-approvals (for items as diverse as automobile parts, fire detectors, and air conditioning Freon) and no refusals. During the same week, only two pouches were rejected.

¶3. (SBU) There have been other noticeable aesthetic changes around the Interests Section, which may be the result of policy decisions, including:

- Offensive signboards removed: Two especially offensive large billboards facing the Interests Section - one comparing President Bush to Adolph Hitler and the other with a thinly veiled sexual innuendo - have been dismantled. Another anti-American billboard at the end of the block has also come down. In all cases the frames remain, so it could be a short-lived reprieve.)

¶4. (SBU) On the other hand, the clumsy hostility remains. After months of neglect, rust and deterioration, the GOC has shown renewed interest in sprucing up the "flag farm" in front of the Interests Section. The poles have been painted (without removing the rust, however) and outfitted with new Cuban flags replacing the former black flags. We'll see how long the Cuban flags, which are already shredding in the steady Malecon wind, will last.  
PARMLY